



## Aruba hosts the ninth annual meeting of Directors of Civil Aviation of the Central Caribbean

Minister of Tourism and Transport, Edison Briesen welcomed on Monday morning over twenty delegates from the United States and Caribbean for C/CAR DCA/9-the Ninth Meeting of directors of Civil Aviation of the Central Caribbean.

Aruba is hosting this important meeting for the first time, and chairing the sessions and official hosts are Jozef Maduro, Director of Civil Aviation, Aruba, and Loretta Martin, Regional Director the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for North America, Central America and the Caribbean. Ms. Martin, newly installed in office, has the distinction of being the first woman to hold the position as regional director.

Directors of civil aviation departments of seven nations began arriving on Sunday, along with representatives of organizations involved with the safety and operation of airports such as RASOS (Regional Aviation Safety Oversight System.) Other organizations with delegates include ARINC (Aeronautical Radio, Inc.) providers of aviation communications, IATA, (International Air Transport Association) providers of coding systems, and IFATCA, the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers'. The stated purpose of these annual meetings is to work on "continuing betterment programs for cooperation throughout the region" This also entails, according to Ms. Martin, "the implementation of ICAO regional and performance objectives in accordance with the ICAO global plan. We are doing this in order to achieve higher levels of safety and efficiency for the air traffic service providers and operators alike."

Official sessions began on July 9, and four days of meetings at the Aruba Surfside Marina will examine a number important issues for aviation directors based on the six points of the "Strategic Objective Framework" was established by the Directors General Conference held in March of 2006 and outlined by Ms. Martin in her welcoming address. These include:

- Safety
- Security
- Environmental Protection
- Efficiency
- Continuity
- Rule of Law

It is important that we promote and incorporate the strategic objectives at every opportunity," asserted Ms. Martin. "I know that it is clear to each one of us that safety is our highest priority. As such, it is incumbent on all of us, states, territories, service providers, operators, and ICAO to insure this safety. One of our highlights since our last meeting involves the "Safety Management System" (SMS) concept. SMS training and implementation is a key issue that we must focus on in the near term. We are transitioning from a compliance based, outcome oriented aviation system to one that is performance based and process oriented."

"We look to SMS training," continued Ms. Martin, "as the training that initiates our means to harmonize all safety related work, and it is a precursor to SMS implementation in the States and territories. Many have taken advantage of the SMA training program with ICAO has provided, and use it to train their own personnel in a more cost effective manner."

"Another critical area where all of us partake of as members of the traveling public is aviation safety," pointed out Ms. Martin. "We have an obligation to all passengers, crew members, operators and owners to insure that aviation is a secure activity, and that every aircraft is safe, that the airports and infrastructure are secure, and that acts of unlawful interference cannot succeed."

To this end, ICOA has provided security, quality control and screening workshops to the aviation departments of Caribbean nations. Ms. Martin attributed much of the success of the World Cricket Cup to daily and weekly traffic management teleconferences that made it possible to handle the enormous influx to the region for the event.

Minister Briesen then offered his welcome to the gathering of delegates that have traveled to Aruba for the conference, something he and the Aruban government consider essential to the island and all of the Caribbean for the continued service to the many visitors vacationing here annually. Ms. Martin expressed that she felt Aruba has "made tremendous strides" regarding security, and Tuesday's agenda

included a presentation of the steps the AAA and Civil Aeronautics Board has taken to insure traveler safety.

The conference will continue until Thursday, with a break to tour the Reina Beatrix Airport and other social events to acquaint the delegates, many of them first time visitors to Aruba, with the island.